

COSPONSORSHIP OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE RENTAL FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, yesterday, I introduced two bills, S. 1130, the Motor Vehicle Rental Fairness Act and S. 1125, the Telecommunications Merger Review Act of 1999. Later in the day, I asked that Senator CONNIE MACK be added as an original cosponsor to the Motor Vehicle Rental Fairness Act. Despite the fact that my request specifically stated "the Motor Vehicle Rental Fairness Act", the Bill Clerk's office inadvertently added Senator MACK as a cosponsor to the Telecommunications Merger Review Act. It is my understanding that this error has been corrected. I want the record to reflect that Senator MACK was an original Cosponsor of the Motor Vehicle Rental Fairness Act.

"SHALL ISSUE" LAWS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss concealed weapons laws. Currently, in Michigan, if a person wants to obtain a permit for a concealed weapon, he or she must apply at the local county gun board. Each one of these gun boards is made up of three members: the local sheriff, county prosecutor and a designee of the state police. The gun boards base their decisions on a person's demonstrated need for a gun, and that person's criminal record, if any, and on local conditions. Local decisionmaking makes sense.

Local law enforcement officials know the local environment, local citizens, and can best assess the local impact of increasing the numbers of weapons carried in public. Last night, the Michigan State Senate passed a bill that, if signed into law, would take discretion away from local gun boards and put more weapons on our streets and in public places. In my view, eliminating the authority of local gun boards would be detrimental to public safety in Michigan and take us in the opposite direction than we are heading in Congress. More important than my opinions are the views of the law enforcement community in Michigan. Every major law enforcement agency in the state of Michigan including the State Police, Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, Michigan Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Michigan Municipal League as well as many other organizations such as the Michigan Municipal League have made statements opposing this bill.

One of the bills that is now before a conference committee of the Michigan Legislature is referred to as a "shall issue" bill. The NRA has been lobbying Michigan legislators to support a "shall issue" policy. The legislation is called "shall issue" because it mandates that if a person passes an FBI Federal background check, the gun board "shall issue" him a permit to carry a concealed weapon, without re-

quiring a show of need or the condition of other local circumstances.

This legislation goes in the wrong direction. It would increase the danger of gun violence in our communities. I have seen no evidence, that people who have a legitimate need to carry a gun for protection are being denied the ability to do so. The numbers demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of requests for concealed weapons permits are approved. It's important for public safety that local gun boards continue to make such judgments.

Here in Congress, we are working hard to reduce the easy availability of lethal weapons to people who should not have them. I do not want to see my State go in the other direction by passing a law that encourages the spread of concealed weapons in public places.

Michigan has not been the only state targeted for these NRA-backed concealed weapons bills. Yet, despite the best efforts of the NRA, the "shall issue" policy has been rejected by a bipartisan group of legislators in more than 10 States. That's because of the power of people in those States who united to demand action. Voters in the State of Missouri recently defeated a "shall issue" proposal much like the one in the Michigan Legislature. Missourians voted to keep in place prudent regulations for carrying concealed weapons—regulations that were first enacted in reaction to the days of Jesse James and the outlaw gangs.

I believe the majority of Michigan's citizens feel the same way.

MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATION REMARKS

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in anticipation of Memorial Day this coming Monday, I wish to honor the memories of the 1.1 million Americans who gave their lives in defense of America and American ideals. Americans have fought and died in various wars spanning over two centuries. Her fallen soldiers have left indelible marks on the annals of history in conflicts notable for the good attained over the evil vanquished: independence over monarchical tyranny; freedom over slavery; and democracy over fascism and communism. Indeed, in this century alone, American servicemembers can be hailed for turning the tide of history's two world wars. As we head towards the dawn of a new millennium, I ask my colleagues to join with me to give homage to America's patriots, in deed as well as word.

I believe the best way to commemorate the spirit of those who gave their lives is to honor, respect, and care for the 26 million American veterans living today. As Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have striven to accomplish this goal through a number of legislative measures and processes. After a successful battle

over the budget resolution, I and 52 of my Senate colleagues signed on to a letter urging the Appropriation's Committee to match the budget resolution's recommendation of an additional \$1.66 billion for veterans' health care. This funding is vital to ensure that our nation's veterans get the highest quality of health care available. I have also pushed for enactment of legislation which would increase veterans' education benefits; allow for a Medicare Subvention demonstration project; require additional national cemeteries to be built in areas with high veteran populations; and ensure that construction of the World War II Memorial begins next year.

The Athenian leader Pericles had these words to say about those who lost their lives in the Peloponnesian War over 24 centuries ago: "Not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions, but there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men." This Memorial Day, I challenge my colleagues to make a commitment to engrave the memory of 1.1 million Americans not only in our hearts, but in the legislation we enact for veterans and servicemembers during the remainder of the 106th Congress.

ELECTION OF EHUD BARAK AS PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate Ehud Barak, on his victory in the recent Prime Ministerial election in Israel. Mr. Barak is a man of courage and a proven leader. He is eminently capable of leading our closest ally in the Middle East at this important juncture in its history. His resounding victory reaffirmed the Israeli people's strong desire for peace.

Not only was the election a victory for Mr. Barak, it was also a victory for Israeli democracy. Nearly four out of five Israeli citizens over the age of 18 cast ballots on May 17, 1999. That figure is even more astounding when you consider that Israelis—even those living overseas—are not permitted to cast absentee ballots. More than ten thousand Israelis purchased airline tickets and traveled great distances in order to exercise their right to vote. This dedication to the most basic pillar of democracy is enviable, for if people fail to exercise their right to vote they quickly lose their voice.

This election also marked an important milestone. For the first time in Israel's history, an Arab campaigned for Prime Minister. Although Azmi Bishara withdrew from the race shortly before the election in order to boost the chances of Mr. Barak, he should be commended for his courage in running. While members of Israel's Arab minority have long been represented in the Knesset—Israel's parliament—Mr. Bishara's campaign demonstrated that

Arabs are welcome in all segments of Israel's political life.

Mr. Barak is both a true son of Israel and a worthy leader of the only democracy in the Middle East. Born on a Kibbutz six years before Israel's independence, he has served his country well as its most decorated soldier, Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, Member of the Knesset, Minister of the Interior and Foreign Minister.

After the polls closed on May 17th, when it was clear that he had been elected, Mr. Barak traveled to Rabin Square in the center of Tel Aviv. Standing just feet from the spot where an assassin's bullet struck Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin three and a half years ago, the Prime Minister-elect renewed his commitment to the Peace Process Prime Minister Rabin courageously began. It was a fitting tribute to Israel's fallen leader.

Making peace is not an easy endeavor. Indeed, it is often more difficult to make peace than to wage war. As Prime Minister Rabin often said, one does not make peace with one's friends, one makes peace with one's enemies. Barak, like Rabin, has proven himself a great general on the battlefield. Now he must prove himself worthy of the even more exalted title of peacemaker. I am confident that Ehud Barak will indeed earn that title, making Israel's second fifty-years devoid of the wars which characterized its first fifty years.

Mr. President, the United States is one of Israel's closest allies. Under the stewardship of Mr. Barak, I am confident that relationship will only grow stronger. I look forward to a close collaboration between our two nations on issues ranging from security to trade. Most importantly, however, is the struggle to bring peace to a region which has seen far too many wars.

MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I received a very touching letter from a Vietnam Veteran from my state, who was recently awarded the Silver Star for his bravery during the Vietnam Conflict.

Helping Al Myers get that Silver Star and the recognition he deserved for so long was a very rewarding experience. Al sent me this letter. It is a fictional remembrance of a soldier whose name is on the Vietnam Memorial.

The letter defines the importance of paying tribute to our nation's honored soldiers who have fought for, won, and kept our freedom, whether that tribute comes in the form of our nation building a great "Black Granite Wall," or simply a family member putting flowers on a beloved white tombstone at a veteran's cemetery. It exemplifies the strength, dedication, and sacrifice our nation's military men and women, and

their families, make. We are forever indebted to them, and it fills me with great pride and humility to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our way of life as Americans.

I thought it was very important to read it in honor of the Memorial Day Observance on Monday. It touched my heart and I wanted to share it here on the Floor today. It is called "The Wall from the Other Side."

THE WALL FROM THE OTHER SIDE

(Pat Camunes)

At first there was no place for us to go until someone put up that "Black Granite Wall." Now, every day and night, my Brothers and Sisters wait to see the many people from places afar file in front of this "Wall." Many people stopping briefly and many for hours and some that come on a regular basis. It was hard at first, not that it's gotten any easier, but it seems that many of the attitudes towards that Vietnam War we were involved in have changed. I can only pray that the ones on the other side have learned something, and more "Walls" as this one, needn't be built.

Several members of my unit, and many that I did not recognize, have called me to The Wall by touching my name engraved upon it. The tears aren't necessary, but are hard even for me to hold back. Don't feel guilty for not being with me, my Brothers. This was my destiny as it is yours to be on that side of The Wall. Touch The Wall, my Brothers, so that I can share in the memories that we had. I have learned to put the bad memories aside and remember only the pleasant times that we had together. Tell our other Brothers out there to come and visit me, not to say Good-bye but to say Hello and be together again . . . even for a short time . . . and to ease that pain of loss that we all still share.

Today, an irresistible and loving call summons me to The Wall. As I approach, I can see an elderly lady . . . and as I get closer, I recognize her—It's Momma! As much as I have looked forward to this day, I have also dreaded it, because I didn't know what reaction I would have.

Next to her, I suddenly see my wife and immediately think how hard it must have been for her to come to this place, and my mind floods with the pleasant memories of 30 years past. There's a young man in a military uniform standing with his arm around her—My God!—he has to be my son! Look at him trying to be the man without a tear in his eye. I yearn to tell him how proud I am, seeing him stand tall, straight and proud in his uniform.

Momma comes closer and touches The Wall, and I feel the soft and gentle touch I had not felt in so many years. Dad has crossed to this side of The Wall, and through our touch, I try to convince her that Dad is doing fine and is no longer suffering or feeling pain. I see my wife's courage building as she sees Momma touch The Wall and she approaches and lays her hand on my waiting hand. All the emotions, feelings and memories of three decades past flash between our touch and I tell her that . . . it's all right . . . carry on with your life and don't worry about me . . . I can see as I look into her eyes that she hears and a big burden has been lifted from her on wings of understanding.

I watch as they lay flowers and other memories of my past. My lucky charm that

was taken from me and sent to her by my CO . . . a tattered and worn teddy bear that I can barely remember having as I grew up as a child . . . and several medals that I had earned and were presented to my wife. One is the Combat Infantry badge that I am very proud of, and I notice that my son is also wearing this medal. I had earned mine in the jungles of Vietnam and he had probably earned his in the deserts of Iraq.

I can tell that they are preparing to leave, and I try to take a mental picture of them together, because I don't know when I will see them again. I wouldn't blame them if they were not to return, and can only thank them that I was not forgotten. My wife and Momma near The Wall for one final touch, and so many years of indecision, fear and sorrow are let go. As they turn to leave, I feel my tears that had not flowed for so many years, form as if dew drops on the other side of The Wall.

They slowly move away with only a glance over their shoulders. My son suddenly stops and slowly returns. He stands straight and proud in front of me and snaps a salute. Something draws him near The Wall and he puts his hand upon the etched stone and touches my tears that had formed as dew drops on the face of The Wall . . . and I can tell that he senses my presence and the pride and love that I have for him. He falls to his knees and the tears flow from his eyes and I try my best to reassure him that it's all right, and the tears do not make him any less of a man. As he moves back wiping the tears from his eyes, he silently mouths, "God Bless you, Dad . . ."

God Bless You, Son . . . we Will meet someday, but in the meanwhile go on your way . . . there is no hurry at all.

As I see them walk off in the distance, I yell loud to Them and Everyone there today, as loud as I can: Thank You For Remembering. . . . Thank You All For Remembering . . . and as others on this side of The Wall join in, I notice the U.S. Flag, Old Glory, that so proudly flies in front of us everyday, is flapping and standing proudly straight out in the wind from our gathering numbers this day . . . and I shout again, and . . . again . . . and again . . .

Thanks for Remembering!

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Thanks for Remembering!

THE CONTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, with Memorial Day soon upon us, I wanted to share with my colleagues some of the testimony from yesterday's Senate Immigration Subcommittee hearing on "The Contribution of Immigrants to America's Armed Forces." It featured some dramatic testimony from both immigrants and native-born individuals.

Let me begin by quoting the testimony of Elmer Compton, a native of Indiana who served in Vietnam.

When I look at my wife, son and daughter, I cannot keep from thinking of one particular immigrant by the name of Al Rascon and the contribution he made to me and my family on March 16, 1966. The heroic and gallant actions of Al Rascon on that day, I believe saved my life, as well as other members of my team.

On March 16, 1966, Al Rascon was with the Recon Platoon on a search and destroy mission known as Operation Silver City. My